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Several Papers on the Type of the Greek Epitaphios with Special Reference to the Oration in Thucydides

* FOURTH PAPER

THE RELATION WHICH OUR SPEECH SUSTAINS
TO THE HISTORY OF THUCYDIDES AND TO
THE ORATION ACTUALLY DELIVERED
BY THE ORATOR PERICLES

Technically speaking the funeral oration of Thucydides here put into the mouth of Pericles is the only example of the epideictic class in the history of Thucydides.

Since we have it from Thucydides himself, that he had, from the beginning of the war, formed the purpose of writing its history, we may fairly suppose that he heard most of the discussions which took place in the Ecclesia between 433 and 424 B C, the latter year being the year when his twenty years exile from Athens began. Such discussions would be the addresses of the Corcyrean and Corinthian envoys in 433 B C, the speeches of Pericles, the debate on Mitylene in 427 B C, and the speech of the Lacedaimonian envoys in 425 B C. These, then, are the speeches which must form the basis of a consideration as to whether he treated the speech historically or artificially.

Confining our discussion to the funeral oration, we find that it gives rise to three queries: (1) Does Thucydides here represent the style of Pericles? (2) Does Thucydides here faithfully portray the policy of Pericles? (3) Does Thucydides here give the words of Pericles?

* As stated in the first paper, No 68, these papers are merely intended to be a compilation of data, and are in no sense original. A translation of the Periclean oration was attempted in No 25 of THE LEAFLET.

Professor Jebb's theory is that Thucydides does here represent the style of Pericles: and for three reasons: (a) Thucydides must have repeatedly heard Pericles whom he pronounces the first of Athenians—most powerful in action and in speech (I 139), and it would therefore be strange if he did not give some traits of the eloquence which was so stirring in those times. (b) The bold imagery and striking phrases which are attributed to him by Aristotle and Plutarch are paralleled by certain portions of his Thucydidean speeches. Thus, Arist. Rhet. 3 10 7:

ὥσπερ Περικλῆς ἔφη τὴν νεότητα τὴν ἀπολομένην ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὕτως ἠφανίσθαι ἐκ τῆς πόλεως, ὥσπερ εἴ τις τὸ ἔαρ ἐκ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ ἐξέλῃ . . . ; ἰδὲ τὴν Αἰγίαν ἀφελεῖν ἐκέλευσε τὴν λήμην τοῦ Περαιέως. Plut. Per. 8 5: τὸν πόλεμον ἤδη καθορᾶν ἀπὸ Πελοποννήσου προσφερόμενον, and of those who fell at Samos: ἐγκωμιάζων ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος ἀθανάτους ἔλεγε γεγονέναι καθάπερ τοὺς θεοὺς· οὐ γὰρ ἐκείνους αὐτοὺς ὀρώμεν, ἀλλὰ ταῖς τιμαῖς ἃς ἔχουσι καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἃ παρέχουσι ἀθανάτους εἶναι τεκμαίρομεθα. With such expressions as the foregoing are compared the following in the epitaphios: ch 43: τὸν ἀγῆρων ἔπαινον κάλλιστον ἔρανον προῖέμενοι. ch 41: μνημεῖα κακῶν κάγαθῶν ἀδία ξυγκατοικίσαντες. ch 43: ἀνδρῶν ἐπιφανῶν πᾶσα γῆ τάφος, and others. Cf also ch 62 in his speech to the Athenian Ecclesia: κηπίον καὶ ἐγκαλλώπισμα πλοῦτου.

(c) There is a majesty in the rhythm of the whole, a certain union of impetuous movement with lofty grandeur which Thucydides gives to Pericles alone. Thus, Professor Jebb. But, if I may be so bold as to have an opinion in the presence of such authority, I may say that I think it unlikely that there is any conscious imitation of the style of Pericles in the speech as given by Thucydides, and for the following reasons:

Prof Geo Hempl

If we were to try to conceive what sort of a speech Thucydides himself would have written for his history, keeping in view the spirit and style of the historian as seen in the other portions of his writings, no speech could fit the conception better than this funeral oration. True, it is also a fact that if we were to try to conceive what sort of a speech Pericles would have written, from a study of his life and policy, no speech would fit that conception better than this, so far as its style is concerned; *but*, Thucydides was writing for his history, not so Pericles. Thucydides had ample excuse for deviating from the beaten track of the Epitaphios, not so Pericles. No one of the epitaphioi is so far from the set type of the Epitaphios in point of view of subject-matter as the funeral speech of Thucydides. And this in my judgment is conclusive as against the verbatim theory. Again, Thucydides's business was not to imitate the style of the masters of oratory for the benefit of posterity. His work was not that of a rhetorician, but he was to represent the motives which were at work in shaping the destinies of Greece and the policies of her foremost statesmen. The fact that Thucydides was in very close personal contact with affairs in Athens at that time argues well for his historical accuracy in his facts and philosophy, but, if it proves anything beyond this, it proves what is too much—that he gives the actual words of Pericles, for it is untenable that Thucydides would stop to imitate Pericles when he could get his very words. The verbatim theory is, as I have said, refuted by the extreme lack of harmony of the subject-matter of the speech with the unyielding requirements of the type. I find after having written the above that to Dahlman belongs the credit of the argument from non-conformity, though I have the consolation of knowing that I am not alone in my opinion. It is futile to urge that the absence of mythical embellishments is rather a proof of the fidelity with which Thucydides has reported a speaker who regardless of the vulgar taste was resolved to treat a well-worn theme in a new and higher strain. Such, however, is the insinuating statement of Jebb. But this will not hold, because: (1) It is not characteristic of Thucydides to report a speaker with such fidelity, as he, Thucydides, himself admits. (2) The taste which made the Epitaphios what it was, is not vulgar when looked at from a historical point of view. (3) The theme was not at that time so well-worn as to have become tiresome, since this is the

first extant speech of the kind that has come down to us. The type had not been set long enough to have become tiresome. And (4) so great departures from the norm were not made in later times when the theme was worn even to being threadbare.

To these considerations are to be added (1) the testimony of Plutarch (Per. 8) to the effect that Pericles left no written speech.

(2) Quintilian declared those extracts in his time to be spurious. (Cicero in Brut. 7, evidently refers to those speeches imputed to Pericles by Thucydides with no thought of expressing an opinion as to their genuineness.) (3) The picture of Athens as painted in the epitaphios forms a fitting comparison with that of Sparta presented in the speech of Archidamus in 1-80ff, in which we trace again the mind of Thucydides, so visible throughout his entire history in the pairing of speeches, and which contributes so much to its dramatic effect. In fact the speech seems rather to have been written for the student of history than for an audience of mourners.

(4) It is observable that Thucydides, in ushering in his speakers, studiously employs terms implying that he is only reproducing the substance of what they said or might have said, e.g.: *ἔλεγε τὰδε ὁρ ταῦτα*. (5) Thucydides used his speeches as his especial means of tracing back the visible facts to the internal moving causes and in no speech is this principle more clearly seen than in this funeral oration. For there can be no doubt that the speeches attributed to Pericles and this one in particular, do accurately represent the characteristic features of Pericles's policy. No dramatist ever better understood the art of thinking and feeling everyone of his characters than Thucydides. From an Athenian he can become Archidamus, or Hermocrates. He can lose his individuality as the historian and don or doff any make-up at pleasure. As an artist he plays each role with a view to the unity of the whole and here his individuality never forsakes him. He recognizes in Pericles the foremost statesman of his time; he represents him as a believer in Athens for Athenians, as an advocate of peace, arbitration, reciprocity,—the Henry of Navarre of Greece. He thinks Pericles, he feels Pericles, he writes Pericles—not Pericles the orator, but Pericles the man, the statesman, the policy, and in painting Pericles, he paints the Periclean age.

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